

Greek American Oral History Project

Oral History Interview

with

Penny Kastanis

June 22, 2006

Sacramento, California

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Capital Campus Oral History Program
California State University, Sacramento

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[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

Ettinger: Today is Thursday, June 22nd, 2006. I'm Professor Patrick Ettinger from California State University in Sacramento, and I'm sitting in the Sacramento home of Mrs. Penny Kastanis, who has agreed to participate in a series of interviews about the Greek-American community in Sacramento.

Let's begin, Penny, this morning, by talking a little bit about your background. Tell us when you were born and where.

Kastanis: I was born February 7th, 1936, at Sutter Hospital right here in Sacramento, so saying that I'm a local, I am a local. I lived part of my life, though, in Roseville. I was there until I was nine years old. We had our home in Roseville, but my mother came to Sacramento.

In those days in 1936 there were quite often times when people would have children at home, they didn't go to the hospital. But my mother and father were very modern about things like that, and my sister the same way. Even though she was ten years earlier than me,

she was to be born in a hospital. That's all there was to it, no midwives or anything like that. So I was born at Sutter Hospital.

Ettinger: That was a long drive in from Roseville.

Kastanis: Yes, it was. Yes, it was. And in those days it was not quite as direct a route as it is today.

Ettinger: Let's start, going backwards first, and tell me a little bit about your mother. When and where was she born?

Kastanis: My mother was born in Turkey in a town called Aivali. Aivali is on the coast of Turkey, across from the island of Lesbos. Lesbos is Greek, it's one of the Greek islands. But where she lived was Turkey. But there were many Greeks at that time, and she was born in 1906. So at that time, though, the Greeks inhabited the area, but it was basically the government was Turkish. So you had the Muslim influence along with the Christian influence, because they were Greek Orthodox.

She had a fairly large family. Her mother was a widow at eighteen years old, had four children before she was eighteen. This is my grandmother. She was also Penelope; I'm named after her. She was married when she was twelve years old, because it was the Muslim

kind of idea, not so much the Christian, but she lived in a Muslim country, so as soon as she became a woman and matured, she was married and began to have babies.

So she had four children before, was a widow when she was eighteen, and then remarried again, and then that's when my mother was born. There were another four children after that.

Ettinger: Tell me your mother's full name.

Kastanis: My mother's name was Katina Kassivis.

Ettinger: Which child was she of the four?

Kastanis: She was, of the second four she was the second oldest, and the first one was the one who lived in Sacramento, Efrosini. There was Efrosini, Katina, Nicola, and the last one was, wait a minute, I'm trying to think of his name, Thanassi [phonetic], Thanassi, Tom, would have been Tom. So those were the last four. So she grew up in Greece and she was there until she was about seventeen, eighteen years old.

Ettinger: So when did they move to Greece?

Kastanis: They never went to Greece, they stayed in Turkey. But there's a long story about that, too. I'll share it with you when we get to that.

Ettinger: What was her mother's first and second husbands, were they farmers, were they merchants?

Kastanis: I don't know what the first one was. I know the second one was a merchant. He had a store right on the waterfront in Aivali. It was a place where the ships came in. They brought in spices, they brought in carpets, they brought in all sorts of things from the Middle East, and this is where they would stop, and he was, like, a merchant there. They lived in a fairly large home, from what my mother has said, and they were not farmers, so it wasn't considered. . . . they were part of the, not the elite, that's not what it was, but they had been educated, so therefore they had a little bit more than some of the other people that lived in that area at that time. But this is at the turn of the century, so therefore you would expect that, you know, it wouldn't be the same as it would be today if you were to go to this town.

But at that time, like I said, my mother was educated. They all went to school. In fact, her oldest sister, Efrosini, that's the one who came to the United States, even went on to the University of Athens, and she was to become a doctor. But then the war broke out. In 1922

the Greeks and the Turks started to fight, and that was the time when she was brought back home, and then she was sent off to the United States. She became a midwife, that's the training that she got. She did become a midwife.

But somebody came forward and somebody came back to the village, and wanted to marry her, and so she came to the United States and came to Sacramento. So there's a Sacramento base from my aunt and my mother, because this is where they came when they came from Greece, was Sacramento.

Ettinger: Who did your aunt marry?

Kastanis: My aunt married a man who became. . . . he was quite wealthy, but this is during the twenties, and he was a bootlegger. Spiro Giacomelos was his name, and Spiro had. . . . they had two children, and that marriage didn't last very long. There were two children that came out of that, I have a cousin still alive, but my aunt ended up divorcing him, because not only was he a bootlegger, but he also had some houses of prostitution downtown in Old Sacramento, would have been down on 2nd Street. Yeah, see, so that was the old period of time.

But he did make a lot of money. He made a lot of money and then he moved to the Bay Area. But no, my aunt never remarried, and she had her two children, and my mother and my aunt were very close.

Ettinger: Let's continue with your mother and your aunt. Tell me your aunt's name again?

Kastanis: Efrosini, Frosine.

Ettinger: Did they come over. . . . she came over, married and came over.

Kastanis: She came over first.

Ettinger: Did your mother come how much later?

Kastanis: She came over, let's see. She was four years older than my mother, so she came over when she was eighteen. My aunt had already had the children. She would have been in her early twenties.

Ettinger: Your mother?

Kastanis: No, my aunt, my aunt. And my mother came over and there was a reason for her coming over. Not only did my aunt want her to come here to help her with the children and all that, as her sister, as her younger sister, but this is when, 1922, when the Greeks and the Turks were fighting, and my grandmother wanted to get her out of the country. She had to get her out.

The fighting that went on is much like any kind of fighting, ethnic kind of fighting, religious kind of fighting. The women were handled very badly, not just killed, you know. They were tortured and raped and all of those kinds of things. So anyway, my grandmother wanted to get her out of the country. And the night that she, my mother, left on the boat to come to the United States, and my mother told the story and she would cry every time, that my grandmother said to her, "I will never see you again. This is our last time."

And my mother said, "No, we'll see each other again."

She said, "No. We will never see each other again, because you're going to another life, and we will not live through this."

Ettinger: How old was your mother?

Kastanis: She was about seventeen or eighteen. But they had been refugees for a period of time, too, when they were in Turkey. The Greeks would

come through, then the Turks would come through, and they continued to fight. This went on for a while, for a couple of years, and when my mother was a child they took off to the hills.

There was a period of time where the family was broken up, and part of the children went with an uncle, the other children went with the mother and father, and they took off and they didn't see each other for over a year. Then they came back to the village, to Aibayeeek again, and the children had grown up and they had not even. . . . as my mother would explain, she said, "The home that we lived in, there were trees growing inside the house, we'd been gone so long." There was nobody inside the house.

So when they came back down again the war was still going on, and the only reason they survived at all was my grandmother could speak Turkish, and she was, like, a translator for the Greeks that were around the area, so there was some respect there. But otherwise, you know, it was not much different than what's going on today.

Ettinger: As a free-for-all, and a power . . .

Kastanis: Same thing, same thing, hasn't changed. So my mom came here when she was about. . . . she came here, she was a little less than eighteen.

Ettinger: This was in 1922?

Kastanis: This would have been 1922. Yeah, see, because she was born in 1906, so what would that have been? Well, she was sixteen, seventeen, then. Yeah, see, that's what she would have been, because she got married when she was eighteen, so she was a little bit younger. Yeah, she was a little bit younger. She would have been. . . . see, she was born in 1906, this is 1922, so she would have been sixteen, seventeen.

Ettinger: Did she sail by herself?

Kastanis: Yes, she did. Put her on the boat. That's the way it was in those days. Put her on the boat and she came into Ellis Island. In fact, my cousin, whose name is also Penny, she's another Penny, all of the sisters, everybody had a Penny in the family, because that was my grandmother's name, her daughter has been doing some searching and got on the website, and found that her name was in the. . . . at Ellis Island when she came in, so she did come into Ellis Island. Then she traveled across on train, by train.

Ettinger: So she did her own travel? Nobody from Sacramento went out to meet her?

Kastanis: Nope, nope. She traveled across, came to Sacramento, and that's where her sister was waiting for her.

Ettinger: What a frightening journey.

Kastanis: Yeah, yeah. But those are the things that happened in those days. I mean, she'd already gone through war and everything like that. This was nothing. I mean, at least she didn't have to deal with, you know, people trying to kill her or anything like that.

Ettinger: And those sisters were already close?

Kastanis: They were already close, yes, yeah, see. So anyway, so she came out here. There was another sister that was a half sister from the first family, the first family. She lived in Hammond, Indiana, and on the way out she stopped there for a short period of time, saw that sister, and then from there came out to Sacramento.

So they were never as close. We went out to see them once in the period of time, how many years. They came here to visit us in Sacramento, and that was it. I mean, there was not a closeness, because that was from the first father.

Ettinger: Now, the two other siblings from the same father, did they come to the United States?

Kastanis: No, they stayed there. They stayed there. The one, the older brother, Nicola, that was right after my mother, survived the war in 1922. The younger one did not. My mother went back in 1970, went back to see. My father had died the year before. They had planned to go together, and he had died, and we insisted that she go, and she went by herself again, back to Greece, back to Aibayeeek in Turkey, went to see her home, and saw. . . . her father's store was still there, and it was all Turkish, but she did find somebody who had survived.

She stayed one day and she asked around and there was somebody who had survived, a young man who said the night after she left they had taken everybody, lined them up, killed them all, put them in a common grave. That was her mother, her father, the older sister, the one that was from the first, the older brother, the younger brother, and I think there was one more. Yeah, see, so anyway, so they were all killed. They were all slaughtered and thrown into a common grave, and that was what happened to them.

So they didn't survive, and like I said, her mother was right. She knew what was coming, and she tried to get the children out as quickly

as she could. Yeah, see, so anyway, the one brother, one of the brother's then left with one of the uncles and took off, and they went up to the hills again, and he survived. But he died during the Second World War, and he was the one, this is Nicola, he died during the Second World War, because he stayed in Greece and then died, fought the Nazis during that period of time and was killed during that period of time.

Ettinger: It's an amazing story.

Kastanis: Yeah. So it was, it was a tragic kind of story. It's one of those, you know, you read about these stories and you think, how did they. . . . these were young kids, how did they survive? How did they. . . . it made my mother a very strong person. She was, she was very strong, as my dad used to say every once in a while, because my dad's story is interesting, too. He'd say to her, "Maybe we'll go back to Greece and live."

She says, "No, no, no." She says, "I'm an American woman. I'm not going to Greece. I'm living here. This is my country. This is where I belong." So anyway, so she came here and lived here with my aunt, and then when she got to be about eighteen, that's when it was, because she came earlier, and then when she got to be about eighteen it

was time for her to start looking for a husband. And so they said, "Okay, we've got to start making the plans," the planned marriages. And that's what they did.

There were a lot of Greeks in the area at the time, and the first group that had come in at the turn of the century in the early 1900s and, you know, those people.

Ettinger: The bachelors.

Kastanis: Yeah, the bachelors and all that. And there were very few families that had come at that time, but there were a lot of bachelors, and the majority of the bachelors worked on the railroad in Roseville. That's where my father came. His father came at the turn of the century, and was working on the railroad in Roseville, would send money back to the family, would go back periodically.

And his name, Antonopoulos, that was the family name. My dad's name was Giorgios Antonopoulos, which he changed legally to George Anton, and he didn't come till about 1915. The father had been working here all this time, would go back periodically, get together with the wife, have another child, and come back, you know. I mean, that's the way it worked. So he was working on the railroad in Roseville.

My dad came when he was about fourteen, fifteen years old. It was about 1915 when he came.

Ettinger: And your father's first name?

Kastanis: George, Giorgios. Yeah, so anyway, so he came in 1915 and he settled in Roseville with his father.

Ettinger: About how old was he now?

Kastanis: About fifteen years old. He was born in 1900. So what happened was, the mother in Greece, and they lived in Greece, they were in a town called Psari. Psari means fish. I always had in my mind as a child fish meant they must have lived on the coast. It wasn't, it was inland. It was in the Peloponnesus in Macedonia, in the Messinia area of Greece, in the southern part of Greece. So he came out. The mother got ill. The father went back and never came back to the United States again, so left my dad here when he was fifteen. He was working on the railroad at the time. And then the First World War broke out, 1916, 1917, so there's no way he was going to go back. So he stayed here, and there was a group of them. There were all these young kids, all teenagers, you know.

So I remember his story was a . . . my dad had a sense of humor. My mother was more serious. My dad had a real sense of humor. He told the story about, "Well, we all got together," and he says, "we all moved down to the Bay Area. There was a bunch of us, there were ten of us." And he says, "I was the only one that could speak English, really. The rest of them couldn't."

So my dad tells the story about going to Port Chicago, which blew up in the Second World War. He went to Port Chicago with all these young guys, there were about ten of them, and he said, "We're here to work, to build boats," because they didn't want to get into the war. "We're here to build boats."

And they said, "Well, what do you know?"

He says, "I've got my crew with me." There's all these kids, you know, all these kids. And my dad tells the story, he says, "I wanted to look a little older, so I tried to grow a mustache. Didn't grow very well, so I darkened it a little bit so it would look like I had a mustache." So they hired him, and they worked at Port Chicago for about a year or so. They got a house, they rented a house, they all lived together. One of the older guys kind of took care of the house and did the cooking and all that, until the war was over, and then they kind of dispersed.

My dad stayed in the Bay Area, and then moved to South San Francisco, got a job in a drugstore, and lived at the drugstore in the back, but wanted to go to school. By this time he would have been about eighteen, maybe. My dad went to night school at Mission High School in San Francisco, graduated and got his high school diploma at Mission High School, and fell in love with education, and fell in love with learning. But he also knew he had to make a living.

So he had talked to people about this area, coming back to this area, because he had friends up in this area. So he came back and he settled in Lincoln, in Lincoln, California, and he put together his business. His business was off the back of the truck, and he would go from house to house. We're talking about a nineteen-year-old kid, twenty-year-old kid.

He had the truck and then he had. . . . you've seen these pictures, with the pans and the pots and pans hanging from it, and linens and things like that, and he would go from farm to farm and house to house, and sell his goods. He made enough money from that to rent a storefront in downtown Lincoln, which is still there, and this would have been about 1923. It was called Anton Department Store that early, but then it changed.

His cousin, he had a cousin who came over and he took him in partnership with him, because he got so busy. He was doing all sorts

of things. He was doing quite well in that area, and particularly because he also learned to speak Spanish. There were a lot of Portuguese, there were a lot of Spanish-speaking people, because of the pottery plant up there. So they had a lot of ethnic mix up there, and he could speak the language. Like I say, he loved to learn all the time.

So the cousin then finally took over the store, and my dad said, "We're going to leave Lincoln." This was a little bit later.

Ettinger: This is before he married your mother?

Kastanis: No, this is afterwards. So anyway, this happened later. But when they got married, when he started to court my mother, this would have been in 1925, early in '25. He had a friend here in Sacramento, a family that he used to come and visit all the time. They were from the same town in Greece that he was. They were from Psari, and they lived over by McKinley Park. They had a home there, and he used to go there to visit them.

Ettinger: What family was this?

Kastanis: Their name was, well, in Greek it was [Greek word], but it was the Andrews family. Yeah, the Andrews family was there, and, in fact, I'll show you pictures. I've got pictures of them over there. Then they also said, "It's time for George to get married. He needs to be looking for a wife also." He had his own business. He had a car, an old Packard, which was unheard of in those days for anybody to have a car. So that's why he was very popular, because he would come and give everybody. . . . all the kids and all the wives and everybody would get in the car and he'd take them on rides.

So he came to Sacramento and they said, "We're going to have a party." So they invited my aunt, and at that time she was still married, my uncle, and my mother, and they saw each other at the house, and they knew the reason for it.

I know my mom said, "He was very forward." She says, "He came in the kitchen. I was in the kitchen and he came to me and he says, 'Well, how do you like me?'" And so she says, "I don't even know you. What do you mean how do I like you?" [laughs] So that was the end of that, and so they didn't say much more.

Then she proceeded to see other men that were much older, and she said they said, her sister said to her, "Well, you know, so-and-so has got a lot of money."

She said, "Well, can't I find somebody who's got money and is young, too?"

"No, it doesn't work that way." So she went back and said, well, my father wasn't as bad as the rest of them were, so that's when they got together. They didn't get married right away, it was the courting period. My dad used to come and pick my mother up at the house on 29th and J Street, where my aunt was and where my mother was living, and would take them for rides, my aunt and my mother. My aunt would sit in the front seat with my father, and my mother would sit in the back. That was the appropriate thing to do, never unchaperoned. They got to know each other. They got a chance to see each other the one day when my dad said to her, "Are you going to. . . are we finally going to get married, or not?"

"Well, my sister doesn't want me to leave right away. She wants us to, you know."

He says, "No, we're going to get married or else. Your sister wants you to stay and take care of the babies," and he says, "and I want to have a family, I want to have a wife." And so he says, "I've got a store. I'm able to take care of you and do all the things that are necessary." He had the store up in Lincoln, he was settled, and so it's time for him to start the family. And that's when he said, "I will come and pick you up. Your sister's going to be gone in the afternoon like

she usually does go downtown and visit and all that. Make sure that the children are taken care of, and I'm coming to get you."

And he did, and that's when they took off to San Francisco. He had kept his connections in San Francisco from the time when he was with a lot of his friends that he had down in that area that stayed there, so he had made plans already.

Ettinger: Tell a little bit more about that, because we talked about that before it was on tape, so tell me again about the dress.

Kastanis: The dress, the wedding. The wedding was already planned. My father had planned everything, had planned the wedding, because he had his own store he could go to the different warehouses and buy clothing and all sorts of things. So he went and he bought her a gown. He bought her the wedding gown, he got his tuxedo, he set up for the dinner. He had invited his friends. He got set up for the little girls to be the flower girls and all of that, and they got married in San Francisco, and this was in 1925.

Ettinger: Your mother must have had difficult feelings with that, because she was so loyal to her sister.

Kastanis: Yes, she was, she did. And so my dad says, "You've got to make your decision." That's what he said, "You've got to make your decision." And it was a good decision, because at the same time my mother was critical, to a certain extent.

She used to tell the story, she says, "Well, you know, I didn't even have my own bedroom. I'd been living there for over a year," and she said, "I had to sleep on the back porch." So when the time came all at once that she was going to have her own home, because my dad had bought a home in Lincoln, and I'll show. . . . I may have the picture there of the house. And everything was taken care of.

I mean, she was going to be taken care of, and better than she was when she was living with her sister, and in those days that's what women were supposed to do. They were supposed to get married, you know, be taken care of, have a nice home and all those kinds of things.

Ettinger: And she'd seen a number of other suitors and they were mostly set her up for . . .

Kastanis: That's right. The old ones, the other ones were people that were bald and big mustaches and things like that, and my dad was a nice-looking young man. She was eighteen, he was twenty-five, see, so the age difference was not huge. Some of her friends that she knew, some of

the young girls married men that were as many as maybe thirty or forty years older than they were. They were old men. They were the bachelors, like you said.

Ettinger: I imagine when she showed up as a younger sister, setting up, I bet radar went off with all those old bachelors in town.

Kastanis: Oh yeah, all those old guys, that's exactly right, that's what happened. But the interesting thing about it was that my dad was part of that, but my dad always continued, even after he was in Lincoln, he continued even though he didn't go to college at that time—he did later, I'll tell you about that in a minute—he used to take correspondence classes. He loved to learn about psychology, philosophy. He was involved with all of those kinds of things.

They used to call him the doctor, because he had knowledge about things, and he loved to read, and he loved to do those kinds of activities. And my mother was also involved with that. But my dad also had the command of the language. He learned the language. He had an ear for language. He learned English, he had no accent. My mother always had her accent, but my dad had no accent. His writing, he had beautiful handwriting in English and in Greek. I mean, he was special when it came to those kinds of things.

Ettinger: I didn't ask you about his father's family. Real quickly, were they agricultural farmers?

Kastanis: No, they lived in a small. . . . and they had a bakery. They had a bakery, so they were not farmers again. He had two brothers, two brothers. There were no sisters. As I remember, there were no sisters. I didn't know them as well. My dad did not have contact with his family that much.

Ettinger: Did they come over?

Kastanis: No, never, and he never saw them again. He had two brothers. The one was a brigadier general in the Second World War. He was up, he was in the military, and the other one was running the bakery. My dad just said to them, "Take the bakery," because my father was the eldest and should have received that. But he said, "No." He says, "You're there, and you take it." Because in a lot of the families it was the eldest who had to go back, sell the property, do all that. My dad says, "No. You've been there all these years. You lived through the war and all of those things." He says, "No, that's fine."

We used to send things to them, and that was part of the culture. We always used to send them clothing and money, and whatever we could during the Second World War. We'd put boxes together and send them off, same thing with my mother. There were a few people left, like I said, only a few from my mother's side, the one brother who was left, and we have a picture of him, and he and his wife. This was the one that was not killed during that earlier time with the Turks. So anyway, but my dad's family, he had very little to do with them.

Ettinger: When your father's father went back because his wife was ill, and your father was fifteen in Roseville, whose decision was it for him not to go back as well?

Kastanis: It was his, that's all. His father said, "You're coming back." And he says, "No, I'm not. I'm not going to go back." He says, "I'm going to stay here. The opportunities are better here than they would be in Greece," the life that he had, and the knowledge and schooling and things like that. Going back to Greece would have meant that he would have been working, and he always looked forward to saying that, "There's going to be a day when I'm going to be able to go back to school," and that's why, to be able to finish high school here, which was very unusual in those days. And to be on your own and not even

have anybody to support you on this, to work and to go to night school in order to get a high school diploma.

Ettinger: He worked for the railroads for about two years, then?

Kastanis: Yes. He was like a water boy. He was just a kid. He wasn't one of the big. . . . and he wasn't a big man anyway, so therefore to say that he was on the line doing the tracks and things like that, no. He was one of the smaller ones. That's why when they went to Port Chicago he was the leader of the group. The other guys were bigger than he was, but he was the one who could speak, and he was the one who could speak fluently.

Ettinger: He learned quickly.

Kastanis: Yeah, he did, he learned quickly. So then after my mother and father got married and they were living in Lincoln, they lived there when my sister was born the following year. That's when Bess, who you've already interviewed her, she was named after Vasiliki, which was Bessie, and she was named after my dad's mother. Then, see, I came along then ten years later, and then I was Penelope after my mother's mother.

But that's when my dad then finally said, "I want to get more education." They had the one child, and he had the store and everything, and he signed up to go to school in San Francisco at the School of Podiatry, Dr. Scholl's School of Podiatry. So he went to school there, and they used to go down during the summers and stay in San Francisco, my mother and my sister and my dad, and he would take summer classes. He got his degree and he became a podiatrist, and he has his diplomas. Our son has the diplomas now. We gave them to George, our son. So he's got them, and the degrees say that he was a podiatrist.

So when he was in the store in Lincoln he was also able to do specialized kinds of fittings of shoes, working with people who had problems with their feet, their legs, children that had problems and their legs would turn in when they were little, he would be the doctor, like. They would go to him for that, and he had the training and he had the degrees to do that, and he did that for many years.

In fact, he's got the old. . . . we had until recently the old x-ray machine in those days. We had the old x-ray machine that they would take x-rays of their feet, to see if the bones were deformed or anything like that. My dad had an x-ray machine, too.

Ettinger: In the department store?

Kastanis: In the department store, yeah. And he had specialized shoes that were from Dr. Scholl's.

Ettinger: There's a sizable little Greek community in Lincoln and Roseville, for sure. But his department store . . .

Kastanis: Was for everybody.

Ettinger: . . . served a much larger . . .

Kastanis: Yeah, a much larger group, and it was not big. I mean, you can't say it was huge, but department stores in those days they called they dry goods stores, dried goods, you know, I mean the pots and the pans and the linens and things like that, and clothing and shoes and that kind of thing.

So anyway, so they lived there until. . . I'm trying to think how long they were there, before they moved to Roseville. They wanted to get closer to Sacramento because, see, there was no church in Roseville or Lincoln at the time, no Greek Orthodox church. In order to come up to church or to visit the friends, they had to come from Lincoln all the way to Sacramento.

So then they moved to Roseville, and that was before I was born. That would have been. . . see, I'm trying to think. They moved there before the depression, '29, '30. They were in Roseville 1928, '29, and my dad, he bought another department store. He bought a department store in Roseville.

Ettinger: Selling the old one?

Kastanis: He gave it. . . he sold his portion to his cousin. The cousin had it for years, and their son just recently sold it. Demas Department Store in Lincoln. It had been there all of these years, from that period of time. So when he moved to Roseville, though, he had sold that one, sold his portion of it, and then came to Roseville and opened a little department store that was next to one of the hotels. It was not far from the railroad again, and the Barker Hotel, which was in Roseville.

The railroad tracks divided Roseville. There was the older part of Roseville that was on the west end, and then on the east end was the newer part of Roseville. If you go down Roseville you'll see Vernon Street and all of that, but that's the newer part of Roseville. On the other side was the older part of Roseville. That's where a lot of the old friends from the past used to live on that side, and that's where his department store was.

During the depression he lost it. He lost the department store. They had a home that they lived in on the other side, and they almost lost the home, but that's when my mother kind of took over. My dad lost the department store, so he had no work. Part of the problem that he has was also he was the kind of person that felt badly for people that were worse off than he was, and my mother always used to say, "Well, everybody who came in and couldn't pay for the shoes or the clothes or things like that, your dad would say, 'Well, I'll put it on credit. Don't worry about it, don't worry about it.'"

The kids would come in, no shoes, and it was, "What am I going to do?" So he ended up losing that. So he was without work up until about 1939, during a period of four or five years, just doing odd jobs and things like that. That's when my mother started raising chickens in Roseville, and I'm telling you, she had a business going, chickens and eggs. She saved enough money to pay the house payments. She never went out and work anyplace, and then from the little bit that my dad used to make they saved enough so that they did not lose the house.

But she had a chicken, and I remember later on as a child, she was in that business for quite a while, and I'll tell you a little bit about that in a minute. But yeah, but that's how she said, "Don't worry about it."

We'll save our home, and we'll live here, and you just go out and you're going to have to find other jobs." And he did.

1939, before the Second World War started, he got into the restaurant business. Somebody who knew somebody said, "Well, you know, Dan Garris [phonetic] is looking for somebody to run his new restaurant he's going to have in Auburn." And so he says, "And George, you're the perfect person, because you've got the personality and you speak the language, and he's not so good at that. He knows how to run the business, but you're the guy in the front."

So he got involved with this, and this gentleman, who was a dear person—he was single, he did not have a family—took us on almost like his own family, took my dad in as a partner.

Ettinger: Now, what's his name?

Kastanis: His name was Dan Garris. Dan Garris took him in as a partner, and he worked in Auburn. It was called, the restaurant that he was involved with was called the Sugarplum, and it was up in the old part of Auburn. And he was up there all through the Second World War, from '39 till about '44.

Ettinger: Driving up from Roseville?

Kastanis: Driving up, but he wouldn't drive up, because in those days you had to ration, you know, you had the gas rationing. So he would grab a ride with the bread guy. The bread man would be going up to Auburn, and then he'd come back, and he was seven days a week. And it was a fairly large place. This was a restaurant, it was a soda fountain, it was a candy store, they made their own candy, and there was a liquor store, and my dad was the manager. The fellow who owned the place really, Dan, was in the back cooking or downstairs making candy, and my dad was up in front.

Ettinger: Was the owner a Greek-American?

Kastanis: He was Greek-American also, yeah, but with no family. He was like an uncle. Yeah, he was like an uncle, and took the family on, and just kind of was very generous to us. So that was, see, I was born in 1936.

Ettinger: Right in the midst of their hardships, really.

Kastanis: Yeah, all of this, the hardships and all of that. But I never knew hardship. Even during the Second World War I knew very little of it, because with the restaurant we always had certain things that some of

the other families around us didn't have, and so if my dad brought butter down or sugar, or things like that, we'd share it with the neighbors, because we had enough.

And then my mother was still doing her chickens in the back. I remember taking the basket of eggs and going off, fifty cents a dozen, even in those days, fresh eggs, and then the chickens she'd sell them for a dollar each, and she made enough money off of that. She'd kill the chickens herself.

Ettinger: Must have had quite a big acreage.

Kastanis: No, we didn't have a big acreage, but we lived on Folsom Road in Roseville, which is a regular suburban kind of a setting, but it went from Folsom Road and it went all the way to the other street. So the front part of it was the house and the yard, the back part of it was the garden and the chicken pens, and in those days you could do those things.

And the fun story was my mother saying about when she would have the chickens, what would she do? My dad couldn't kill the chickens. My dad was too kind-hearted, he couldn't do that. But my mother used to have the neighbor come over and kill the chickens, but she felt bad so she'd always give her a chicken, too, while she was

coming over and killing the other chickens. My mother finally said, "That's enough of this. I'm losing a dollar every time I give her a chicken." So my mother says, "I'll learn how to kill those chickens," and so she did.

[Interruption]

So anyway, you know, we're not even to me. The stories about my folks are probably the most interesting. My life is just the average kind of life most kids would have, you know, nothing too dramatic really. But their lives were. . . . I look back on them and I think to myself, we're so concerned about our kids going out on their own, and afraid that they might get hurt, they might do this.

These were young children almost that were left on their own, and for some reason they had enough commonsense, or the world was different. I don't know what it was. They were able to make things and do things on their own without anybody. See, they had no parents to help them along the way, to give them advice. They had to depend on each other. That was it, a commitment to each other, and they knew what was the right thing to do. And so that's, you know, with the two of them.

Then when the war was over with, that's when they sold the place in Auburn.

Ettinger: Which he had a stake in at this point?

Kastanis: He had a stake in, but never a monetary stake. This man was very good. Dan was a wonderful man, and it didn't make any difference whether he had a stake. When he sold the business he gave my father part of the money, because he was by himself. He was by himself anyway. He says, "How much do I need? You've got a family and all of that."

And that's when we made the decision to come to Sacramento then, to move on from Roseville and come to Sacramento, you see. That would have been about 1944, and we moved to this house in 1945. It was before the Second World War was over with, before the. . . see, I remember being here when they said that the war was over in Japan. We were here on D-Day, and then also with the Japanese surrender.

Ettinger: You mentioned that one of the reasons they wanted to move to Sacramento was because of the church. Was that for both your parents, or your mother, your father, one more than the other?

Kastanis: Both, both, both. Neither one of them, though, were what you would call major churchgoers. They just knew the importance. It was part of their life. But to say that they were there all the time, no, they weren't. They weren't there all the time. And I think because we were so far away, that we would come to church and it was an outing to come to church.

And when we'd come to church in Sacramento, then we'd spend all day Sunday visiting our friends. We'd go from house to house, and people would, their homes were open. So you knew that on Sunday it was not something where you rush back home. No, that's when you went and visited people then, too. You went to see people. So that was something that we did.

But maybe we'd do that twice a month. We wouldn't do it every Sunday, because in those days in order to get to Sacramento you had to come across from Auburn Blvd. Auburn Blvd. was there, and then you would take a turn to go across the 16th Street Bridge at that time, to come into town. If that was flooded, which sometimes it was during the rains, then you'd have to go through. . . . we'd come through where Marconi is. You'd take Auburn Blvd. up to about Fulton and come down that way, and come across the H Street Bridge, in order to get to Sacramento.

The church at that time was 6th and N. It was not where it is now. And that was there until the 1950s, and so I still remember that. And when we came to Sacramento we became much more involved with it. I became involved with choir. I had to go to Greek school, things like that.

See, my sister was ten years older, so I came here, I was nine years old, she was nineteen, going to Sacramento City College. She had graduated from Roseville High School, going to City College. She met a young man there and that's when they started going together, Terry Feil. Terry was a family, the family had been here for many. . . . the family on his mother's side had come over in covered wagons in this area, and so they were well known in this area, but they were not Greek.

And that was unheard of in those days, 1945. She came and said, "We want to get married. What are we going to do?" And my mother said, "You're not going to marry him. He's not Greek."

My father said, "But you understand, she's old enough to go off and get married anyway. You know that."

"Yes, but . . ."

And he says, "We're going to support her. We're going to do what's necessary. She loves him, that's what we're going to do. And

we're going to have a wedding." She was one of the first Greek girls that married a non-Greek, one of the first ones, and that was, like I said, was very unusual.

And her wedding was unusual. I don't know if she told you about this, but she did something unheard of at that time. The wedding that was held for my sister in 1946 . . .

[Begin tape one, side B.]

Kastanis: The wedding was held at St. John Lutheran Church, down on 17th and L, and we had to get special dispensation from the archdiocese in New York, from the Greek Orthodox Church, to be able to hold service there. So it was not only Lutheran, which my brother-in-law was, but it was also Greek Orthodox, unheard of.

See, we think we're so far advanced. Sometimes I think we did things in the past when we didn't make such a big deal out of it. So they got married by the Lutheran minister, Reverend Roameyes [phonetic], who we've known for years, and then got married by the Greek priest, and he also did the service. So there were two services in the St. John Lutheran.

And the reason for that was there were so many people, they would never have fit in the church, the Greek Orthodox church. It was too

large. That church that we had down on 6th and N was very small. It only held maybe 150, 200 people at the most, and this was a huge wedding.

So anyway, so they did it right. My parents did it right. They gave her a beautiful wedding. The reception was at the Senator Hotel. It was just before Christmas. Everything was done the way it was supposed to. They had a full dinner, they had dancing, they did the whole bit, and so it was very nice. It was a lovely wedding. And they stayed married until he died, and he died young. He was only forty-eight when he died. He died of cancer, and so Bess was a widow then. So they were just young when they. . . . they'd been married almost thirty years by that time, so they were just a young couple when they got married, and she had three children.

Ettinger: Let's back up just a little bit. We skipped over you being born officially.

Kastanis: Right. I have to tell you, though, before you go on . . .

Ettinger: Please.

Kastanis: I have a difficult time talking about myself. Not that there's anything so important, but I enjoy talking about others and what they've done, and things like that. I have a difficult time telling you about what I've done. I've done a lot of stuff, but I leave out probably half of it, because I'm just that way.

Ettinger: Well, I'll work on you and see how it goes.

Kastanis: OK.

Ettinger: Tell me about some early memories. You lived in Roseville till you were about eight or ten.

Kastanis: Nine, eight, nine years old.

Ettinger: So tell me early memories of Roseville. Did you spend a lot of time in the little Greek community there?

Kastanis: No, no. It was not the Greek community at all. I had very little to do with the Greek community there. We spent time with the neighbors around the area. The people next door, Auntie Rose and Pinky [phonetic], the Glidden [phonetic], that was not their name, was Rose

and, in fact, I can't even remember what his name was, Ed, Ed Glidden, and they had children but they were my sister's age. And then the neighbors across the street, the Terrys, and I remember playing, being out in the street and playing kick the can and stuff like that, but not with the Greek community. We didn't have any Greeks living around us.

Ettinger: Your sister and you were far enough apart that you didn't play together?

Kastanis: Far enough apart. No, I was the brat, because I would tell on her all the time. So anyway, so if she was talking to boys I would run to my mother and say, "She's talking to boys again." See, so anyway, so I was the brat. I was always telling. She was the teenager, you know, she was sixteen and I was six.

But the thing that we did have in common was singing, yeah, because we both sang, and my sister sang professionally. My sister started singing when we were in Roseville. When she was thirteen years old she singing with a band. My dad used to go with her, and they would have at the Redmonds Hall or wherever it was, someplace where they would have dances on the weekends.

My sister would go and sing with the band. She'd get paid two bucks or something like that for signing with the band, and my dad would have to go with her. And so my dad would go with her, be there till one o'clock in the morning, come home, get cleaned up, and then get ready for the bread truck to come and pick him up to take him up to work, and he'd to pick up the bread truck about three-thirty in the morning.

Ettinger: What kind of band was it?

Kastanis: You know, dance band, the big bands. She sang with most of the big bands. In fact, the other day when Bill Rase just passed away recently, Bill Rase we had known for years. Bess sang with him, I sang with him, but we were both singers. Now, where did we get that? It was not the training, but my mother was very interested in music. We both had piano lessons. My sister had dance lessons, all of those kinds of things. I remember taking piano lessons as a child in Roseville. It was fifty cents a lesson, going in and taking piano lessons, and music was very important for us.

And we used to sing together. We'd go to functions. If we were at functions the two of us would sing. I've got memories of people saying, "I remember when you and your sister used to get up and

you'd sing together." We'd sing all the songs from the past, you know, the Andrews Sisters kinds of things, *Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree* and stuff like that, and I was just a little kid. Or else I'd get up and just sing by myself.

So, yeah, we were both performers, very much so. Bess went on even more so, as far as performing was concerned, and she did that for quite a few years. Even after she'd gotten married she was performing. She had an opportunity, probably, to go big time if she wanted to, but she was married and had three children, and she says, "I can't do that." Because the group that she was with was on its way to Vegas, and from there was going to go to Los Angeles and all these, and she says, "I can't do that."

Ettinger: Did you sing in school as well, yourself?

Kastanis: I sang in school. I sang in school throughout all of school. I sang in school, I sang in bands when I was in high school. I was always a singer. I sang in the variety shows, and everybody knew me as a singer. And I was a music major, so that was basically where I was. Then when I went on to college, again the same thing. I did a lot of performing, and that's when I did. . . . because when I was younger I did a lot of the pop stuff, jazz stuff, and then later on I did a lot of

classical, though, too, and I did opera and those kinds of things, and traveled around at Sac[ramento] State with the different groups, and went to different other colleges and places, and performed. So anyway, I did a lot of that.

Ettinger: Did you, growing up in Roseville before you moved down here, did you have regular chores?

Kastanis: We worked. We worked constantly. We did not. . . . well, it was, you did what was necessary, whether it was cleaning the house, vacuuming the floors, you know, going out and feeding the chickens, cleaning up the poop from the chickens, whatever it was, picking the vegetables. We didn't have free time. In the summertime and we had time off, I remember coming even to this house, but there, too, when I was a little bit older, if I didn't have a job or something to do my mother said, "Fine. We're painting the house," and I'd paint the inside of the house. My dad was working, and I remember painting the house, you know.

We always had chores, always. It was our chore to always help prepare the food, cleaning up, doing washing, ironing. My job was ironing. There was nothing that my mother ever ironed. I would iron everything, and in those days things had to be ironed, and I would iron.

I'd go down in the basement here, in the basement there, and I'd have an iron and I would iron my clothes, my father's shirts, my mother's. So we had some time for play, but it wasn't a lot, and if we did play, I was not one who cared much about playing. My sister did. My sister used to love to roller skate and ride her bicycle and all that stuff; I could care less. My play was reading a book. That's the kind of play I had.

Ettinger: Your mother you said kept her accent longer. Did she speak Greek to you, growing up?

Kastanis: Yes, we spoke Greek first. We always spoke Greek first. My dad didn't, to us. He always spoke English to us, but my mother always spoke Greek to us, you know, even as we got older. And it wasn't that she couldn't speak English. She spoke English just fine; she had an accent, though. She never learned. . . . she read English, but she never learned to write it well. My dad did, yeah.

But education was part of the culture for us. It wasn't a part of the culture for all of the Greeks at that time. A lot of the girls that even I grew up with, their mothers said, "Why is she going to college? She's just going to get married anyway."

My mother said, "Oh no, not my daughter. She's going to have a college education." And they hoped that Bess would have had. Bess only finished two years of college. She did not finish four years, she did not get a B.A. She had an A.A., but she was more interested in going into business, and so, but I was more interested in school, always did extremely well, always got awards, always was, you know.

Ettinger: What school did you start at in Roseville?

Kastanis: In Roseville I went to Vernon Street, and then from there I came to David Lubin here. I went to David Lubin, went to Kit Carson, went to Sac High, and then went to Sac State. I was not allowed to go to college anyplace else. I had a scholarship to go to UOP, because of the music program there, but I couldn't go, because it was someplace else. [inaudible] Very, very strict with me.

Bess was gone before they knew it, but with me they were extremely strict, and everybody knew about it. The kids all used to make jokes about it, because they knew how strict she was. My mother was very, very strict. Not my dad, but my mother was in charge. She was the one.

Ettinger: Was it a reaction to Bess, that they were so . . .

Kastanis: I think so. That was part of it. Yeah, she was very tough. So Bess had gone off and she'd already gotten married, and she married somebody that wasn't Greek, and that wasn't going to happen again. So anyway, so but my mother was very strict, and all the Greek kids, they used to have to come, when we moved here they used to have to come to the house after we'd go out someplace, because I was never allowed to date. I never dated anybody.

I could go to functions where other kids were, but my dad would always take me and pick me up, even when I was in college. There was no dating allowed. I was too busy, and my mother used to say to me, "Do you want to have boyfriends or do you want to have an education?"

I says, "I want an education."

"Fine. Then you don't have time for boyfriends."

And that was, "Oh, okay, all right, fine. Okay, that makes sense. Okay." [laughs]

Ettinger: That must have been a little difficult, though, as a teenager.

Kastanis: No. I used to go out with the guys, and we'd go out and drink beer during the day. [laughs] No, it was not. In fact, some of those people

I still have, they're still friends from college days. I'm still friends with them. A lot of them call me and say, "Let's get together, you know. Let's get together. Why don't we get together and go to lunch or something like that?" Because we were good friends, but never on a dating level.

Like one of the guys, I was always one of the guys, always, and that was fine. I was happy with that. It made my life a lot easier. But as far as knowing anything about how to deal with men in a different format, I was very naïve, very naïve about that. But I could go with them on anything that they might be talking about at the time, and I could be one of the guys on that level. But as far as having a social kind of situation, I was naïve about that.

Ettinger: Right. What year did you start high school?

Kastanis: Sac High I started in 1950. I graduated in '53. I graduated when I was seventeen, yeah.

Ettinger: In three years or in four years?

Kastanis: Well, in those days it was sophomore, junior, and senior, and then Kit Carson was three years, seventh, eighth, and ninth. So I was year

ahead. When I went to school, my first day of school I don't remember it, but I remember the story of it. When I went to school my mother took me to go to kindergarten. I was a fairly good-sized girl. I was not tiny, and I already knew how to read anyway. I walked in, my mother took me into school she says, "I want to sign her up for school."

"Well, let's see. Where does she belong?" So the teacher took me into the kindergarten class.

Excuse me, she took me in to the first grade teacher, and the first grade teacher said, "How old is she?"

"Well, she's just five."

And so she said, "Well, she looks big enough." So she talked to me a little bit and so she says, "Oh, that's fine. Let's just keep her in the first grade." So I never went to kindergarten, so that's why I was ahead. So yeah, I graduated at seventeen, so I was ahead in that, and I never went to kindergarten, and I didn't need to. I always did well in school. Bess not as much. I was the school person. I was the one who always got the As, and that was very important to me, very important.

Ettinger: Returning back to, we talked about your mom speaking Greek to you. What other ways, as a child, did your mom or did your father call up the Greek . . .

Kastanis: Well, the food. The food was very much, though I will have to say my mother was a wonderful cook. She was a terrific cook. The thing that everybody wanted, though, when she'd always say, "What do you want for your birthday dinner?" and we'd say, "Fix fried chicken." Don't ask me why. Of all of the things, not leg of lamb, or anything like that, you know. They'd say, "Fix fried chicken." Her fried chicken was terrific, and everybody loved the fried chicken.

But she made it kind of Greek style, or whatever it was. But it had a crust, crunchy on the outside and all that, but fried chicken was always the big thing. But the food was very much ethnic, very ethnic, and the things that some people maybe wouldn't eat the lamb. I still remember, and I can picture it in my mind, bringing some kids home when we lived in Roseville, and opening up the oven. They said, "Mmm, something smells good." We were just little kids.

And I says, "Oh, you want to see what's in the oven? And I kind of knew what was in the oven. I opened up the oven and they looked inside and they screamed, because there was a lamb's head in the oven, and the lamb had the eyes and these creep. . . . [laughs]

And they said, "Oh, my god, there's a lamb's head!"

I said, "Yeah, my dad loves the lamb's head," and he did. So anyway, my mother was cooking a lamb's head, but things like that

that were the ethnic kinds of things, the kinds of vegetables we made, very few canned things. Everything was prepared, or else she would can them herself, the tomatoes, the fruit, the things like that. We didn't have canned stuff like that, and we ate a lot of fresh.

We'd go out in the fields and pick the dandelion greens. Today the fancy greens that people have now, we used to go out in the field and pick them. My mother would always have, we'd always have a paper bag, a pair of old shoes, and a knife in the back of the car, in the trunk, so if you saw the dandelion greens on the road we'd have to stop the car, and we'd have to go out and have to cut the dandelion greens. Could be anyplace.

I remember going to Howe Avenue over here, right on Howe and Fair Oaks Blvd. there was a great place for dandelion greens there all the time. Anyplace that you went where there was dandelion. On Fulton and Marconi was another good place for dandelion greens, before everything was built. But those are the kinds of things, so the ethnic kinds of things that were important. That was a part of the culture.

The other part of the culture was the kinds of rules and regulations that you lived by, the philosophy that you had of, where did children fall into the picture, where does a woman's place fall into the picture, what is the father supposed to do, all of those kinds of things.

Children were there to be taken care of, but at the same time also to learn that nobody owed you anything. You were to work for what you were to achieve, and that was part of that Greek culture, that, you know, you're just not given everything.

It's like at Christmastime, what did you get for Christmas? Maybe you got one toy, and then you got underwear and you got socks and you got things like that, and that's just the way it was. I remember getting one doll, not a ton of stuff, not fifteen, twenty packages, but that was okay, because we had a close-knit family. It was always the dinner table, sitting down to dinner together, whether it was at this house or the house in Roseville.

This house the table was right here. My mother would cook, my father would come home. She would have the dinner ready on the table, and it was never, she says, "No baloney sandwiches." It was always a full dinner that we would eat, you know. She'd have her meat, her vegetable or pasta or potatoes, whatever it was, and then fruit for dessert. It was always that way. You were always to be. . . . there were things that were organized that way.

You had a party, it was the same way then, too. Everything had to be organized a certain way. There were rules and regulations to everything, how you speak to people, that was the other thing, how

you speak to your elders, and when you go in they'd say to Mama,
"How did you teach her to . . . ?"

"That's the way she has to behave." You would go in, you would go to each one of the elderly people, the older people that were there, the mothers, the fathers, say hello to them, shake their hand, give them a kiss, whatever it was, and that was always, that's the way it was, that's all. You learn those rules.

Ettinger: Did your mom look back or talk about Greece much? I mean, she was Americanizing herself through this period of time.

Kastanis: She never learned to drive, and so that was one of the things that she never Americanized herself the whole way. That was one of the things that she wished that she had done, and my dad never made an issue out of it. He always used to drive her every place anyway, so as far as he was concerned that was fine.

Did she talk? It was only later, and I'll tell you a story, how she didn't share a lot of the things, because they were hard for her to share. I got involved with music, and that was my first arena of teaching. When I went into teaching I became a music teacher. I taught languages, I taught French, I taught Spanish, you know. But then later on I got into the library field, and I told a story to a famous author, a

children's author, and, in fact, there's a book that's dedicated to my mother and to me about this story.

It's called *The Wednesday Surprise* by Eve Bunting. The story is about a grandchild who teaches the grandmother how to read. My mother was probably seventy-five years old, and we were sitting and talking about this one day, and I said, "How did you learn how to read? You didn't go to school here."

She says, "You know, you taught me how to read."

And I says, "What do you mean I taught you?"

She said, "You would bring your books home and we would sit down together, and you would read a page and I would read a page, and you would read a page, and I would read a page, and we would help each other." And she says, "And you never realized that I didn't know how to read." That's how she learned how to read. So I told Eve Bunting this story, and it's a very popular book. It's been read by, I think President Bush, the first one, used it in one of his, when he was reading to a group of kids, talking about literacy and how people learning another language and all that, and that book is used constantly, and it's still very popular.

It was called *The Wednesday Surprise*, and Eve Bunting got a chance to meet my mother, and we were to have a celebration when the book was published. Eve was from southern California and she

was coming up to Sacramento and we were going to have a celebration and everything, and the book was to be published in April, and my mother died in March. But she knew about it. She says, "You mean it, really?"

And in it it says, "Dedicated to Katina Anton," in there, so it does.

Ettinger: How did Eve Bunting hear this?

Kastanis: I got involved with libraries. All at once I became a librarian, because I married a librarian. I got married to Terry. And in the process of that marriage I said to him one day, because I had been working with my sister, with Bess at the employment agencies. I hadn't gone back into teaching after I got married. I taught for a short period of time. I subbed, and then I taught in the Grant District for a while, but I did not have a regular job and I was looking. Did I want to go back into teaching, or did I want to do something else?

And the music program in most of the schools had died anyway, so I said to Terry when the kids were growing, our children, we were in the south area and they were going to Elk Grove schools, I said, "Maybe I'll become a librarian."

He says, "What are you talking about?"

I says, "Well, the principal said to me at the elementary school that they're getting ready, they'd like to set up a library, and they said I'm married to a librarian, maybe I should . . ."

He said, "But you don't know anything about it."

I says, "Well, I can learn," and that's exactly what I did. I went to school, I went back to college again. I already had my master's in music, in education. I went back to school again, got another library credential. Terry was one of my teachers when I went to Sac State again, got the library credential, and then became the school librarian at the school where my kids were.

Ettinger: That's neat.

Kastanis: I wrote a project, and this was in 1972. I wrote a project, a federal grant, received \$75,000, which was a lot of money in those days. . . .

Ettinger: Absolutely.

Kastanis: and as part of that money for that school, Leinbach [phonetic] Elementary in Elk Grove, they were to hire a credentialed librarian. So I had a year to finish the program. Terry says, "You've got one year to finish the program," and I did. I took thirty units in the one

year, at night. I was working during the day at the school, and then I took the classes at night, and then I got the library credential. I became the librarian of the school where the grant was, and that's how I got into the Elk Grove District and became a librarian. That's where it started, 1972, so it was part of that.

As part of that program I used to bring authors to the schools and things like that, and I got a chance to meet many authors, and one of them was Eve Bunting, who was a dear person. She was the one, I remember going out to dinner with her, and she was originally from Ireland. So we were talking about the ethnic backgrounds and the things like that. I told her this story.

About four months later she calls me and she says, "Would you feel okay if I were to write a book about your mother's story? It may change a bit, but to tell the story about somebody who learns to read in another language, who comes from another country and doesn't know how to read?"

I said, "No, that'd be wonderful."

And she says, "I want to dedicate it to your mom." So anyway, so that's how that story . . .

Ettinger: That's neat.

Kastanis: Yeah, so that's how that story happened.

Ettinger: Let's stay with your mother for a second here, and my question is this.

Earlier you sort of made a joke about how your father had said,
"Maybe we'll go back to Greece."

And your mom said, "No. I'm an American woman." Talk to me
a little bit about her role as a woman in the family. That's a very
Greek . . .

Kastanis: She was the strong one. She was very strong. My dad was the dearest,
sweetest man in the world, never a bad word about anybody, never had
a bad thought. My mother was tough. My mother was tough. She
was the tough one in the family. She was the disciplinarian; my father
was not.

I remember I must have been in my twenties, and I think my dad
said to me one day, we were going someplace and he says, "Come on,
let's go have a beer."

And I said, "Oh, that sounds good. Okay, let's go have a beer."

So anyways, so we got to the bar or wherever we were, and I took
out a cigarette. And so I said, "You know, Mama doesn't know about
my smoking."

And he says, "That's okay. You don't tell her about the beer we're having this afternoon, and I won't tell her about the cigarette."

And I said, "Okay, fine. Yeah." Mama was tough. She was a taskmaster. But she was that way with my dad, too. My dad was too easy. My dad would have given everything away. He was just that way.

My mother was the one who would have said, "No, we're buying that other house. We're going to do this."

And my dad said, "Well, why don't we take a little trip? Why don't we do something else?" No, my mother was the one.

Ettinger: Was that unusual in Greek families?

Kastanis: No. The Greek families are matriarchal, and much like *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. It's interesting. That movie was funny because the father seemed to be the one in charge, but it wasn't. The mother said, you know, "The father is the head of the household, but the mother is the neck who turns the head whichever way she wants." And that's exactly what in most Greek households.

Now, yeah, there are some. I would say some of the men, some of the Greek men have more of a . . . it is that Middle Eastern culture, though, too, part of that, that they're in charge. Well, my dad was an

educated man, so there was an equality. It was not something where he was going to be in charge, that he's the man of the house and that was going to work. It didn't work that way. They made decisions. I mean, my mother made the tough decisions, but my dad was always there. But he was the one who taught us the love of humanity, more than my mother did. My mother was the tough one. My dad was the one of, never an unkind word, equal opportunities for everybody, never to say anything badly about anybody, any culture, any race, or anything like that. He taught us we all have a place in society, and he says, "And that's what we have to understand. And we have to love each other."

So, you know, was he a religious man? He wasn't a religious man particularly, either. He was just somebody who understood the philosophy, and he had studied the philosophers of the past, whether they were Greek philosophers, whether they were the German philosophers, whomever they were. He'd studied a lot of that, so he knew how people reacted to certain kinds of things.

He also was very kindhearted as far as people saying unkind things to each other. He could not tolerate that. I never remember. . . . there was one time my father struck me, one time, and I thought. . . . and he was so appalled by what he did, he just cried. And he did, he slapped me one time. I said something, and he could not get over that he had

slapped me, that, you know, he'd come to that point. My mother, it was every twenty minutes. It was a wooden spoon across the side of the head or whatever it was, you know, something like that. But no, my dad was not that way.

But my mother was pretty much in charge. She was the one who said to my dad, "George, I'm buying this lamp."

My dad would say, "Oh, okay." There was never a question.

Ettinger: When you went to Sacramento, there was no chance for Bess or you to go to Greek school, really, in Roseville?

Kastanis: No, but we went here. I went here. And I went there until I was about in, I was probably sixth or seventh grade. And what I used to have to do in order to go to Greek school, which was downtown, and I'd go at least three times a week . . .

Ettinger: And you were living in this house?

Kastanis: We were living in this house. When I would leave school I would take the bus or the streetcar. I would go downtown. This is David Lubin. I would walk to 6th and N, and I would go to Greek school. It was in the middle of the day. I was, like, nine, ten years old.

But I used to go down and pay the bills, too. I'd have the money in my purse, in my little purse, and I'd go downtown. My mother would send me down. Responsible things like that, no fooling around, responsible things. Timelines, "And you're going to be back. This is how long it takes you. You'd better be back by this time." I used to go down and then my mother would come down, because she didn't drive. My dad had the car. So she would take the bus down later and meet me at the church, and then we'd walk back up and take the bus home. The bus would stop up on the corner, over here on Folsom Blvd. And I did that for about three years.

Ettinger: Did you like Greek school?

Kastanis: Well, it was a kick. That was my outing. It was like joining the choir. I joined the choir when I was twelve years old, the church choir. It was my one outing where I could go out and be with other young people, because I wasn't allowed to do that. I saw my friends around the neighborhood a little bit, but after a certain hour you're in the house, because there's things to be done. There's dinner to get ready, you've got to do your studies, you've got to read, you've got to do all those things. You've got to get ready for the next day for school, so I couldn't be out. I wasn't out running around with the other kids. I

mean, we saw each other at school and maybe for about an hour after school, and that was it.

Ettinger: So it was kind of an escape.

Kastanis: So it was an escape, yes, it was. And the escape that I had was being part of the church culture and what was going on at the church, the choir, the Greek school, and then later some of the other organizations and things like that. But not to go out with. . . . I mean, even if they were Greek I still couldn't go out.

Every once in a while I had a girlfriend, maybe when we were a little bit older, who had a car. She would come up and she'd pick me up to go to choir practice on Thursday nights. We'd go to choir practice, and after the choir practice a lot of the kids would go out for coffee, but no, I couldn't do that. She knew when choir practice was, and she said, "You're home here. I have coffee ready for you." She'd have coffee ready. We'd come in, we'd sit at this table right here. We'd open up the window. Everybody could pull out a cigarette and start smoking. [laughs] Blow the smoke out the window, and that's what we would do. And I have some of those same friends, and they always, we laugh about it. And some of them said when they came to the party that we had . . .

Ettinger: You had a party a few weeks ago?

Kastanis: Yeah, when we had the party a few weeks ago one of the guys that I had gone to school with, who said, "Are you having the party at *the house*?" Because this was *the house*, because they knew, even after we went to the new church over here in the fifties, this still was the place to come, because they knew I couldn't go out afterwards, so they'd all come here.

But at eleven o'clock the bell would ring upstairs. My mother had a bell; the bell is still there. She would come to the steps—my dad was already in bed—and she'd say, "Eleven o'clock, time to go home." And five minutes later, "You still here?" And that's what she would do.

And everybody would say, "Okay, it's time to go home," and they'd all leave. And they knew that they'd better not fool around with her. You didn't fool around. You didn't make jokes when she said that; it was time to go home.

When Terry and I got married, before we got married, see, I had an unhappy marriage, where I was married for six months to a Greek from San Francisco, before I married Terry. It was kind of an arranged kind of a situation, which did not turn out well. So here I

come back home, I'm living back home again, I'm twenty-five years old, I am divorced, and I meet somebody who's a very nice man, who comes to the house to visit, and at eleven o'clock my mother would ring the bell and say [imitates], "Terry, you still here?"

And say, "Yes, Mrs. Anton."

"Time to go home." And he knew it was time to go home. And five minutes later if he wasn't gone, she'd ring it again, say, "I tell you, it's time to go home." She was in charge till the day she died. Yeah, that's just the way it was. And I have some of her same tendencies, and I know that. I took some of those tendencies from her, yeah, as far as liking things to be a certain way, organized a certain way, set up a certain way. You know, there's ways of doing things. It's like when we had the party for 130 people, we sent out 130 invitations. Well, you know, if you have two people per. We had about, I guess there were about 150 people. Somebody said, "Now, you going to have a caterer?"

I said, "No, I'm doing the cooking. I'm doing the cooking." I had things set up two days in advance. We had it outside in the backyard. We had kind of the backyard, and we had a bar set up, and we did everything. . . . it was 150 years with the Anton Sisters.

Ettinger: Yes.

Kastanis: Yeah, see. So anyway, so we had that, and then we had tables set along the side here. We had a check-in. They had nametags. We had the bar. We made rum and Coke, we had highballs, we had Shirley Temples, we had Cokes in bottles, we had all of that stuff, and then we had hot dogs in the back. We had a place where I had somebody cooking the hotdogs. My nephew was cooking hotdogs back there, and then in the house I had the food.

The food was in the house, and we had the retro stuff. We had ham, we had macaroni salad, we had beans and we had salad, we had watermelon, we had, you know, Jell-o salads. Everything was retro, no Greek, all the retro stuff. So anyway, see, yeah, so it was a kick. They could come in here and sit, if it was too hot outside they could come inside and sit.

But my mother was the same way. My mother was exactly the same way, and I'll show you the pictures and you'll see, the table that she had set, everything, all the knives and forks, everything was set up in a certain way, and that's the way she was. Things were. . . . when you went out this is the way you were to look. If you went out, she had her gloves, she had her purse, she had her hats, and when my mother and father would go out together, like in the picture when they

got married, my dad would wear his suits, he'd wear his topcoat and he'd have his hat.

And our vacations were, when I was a kid, was San Francisco, even when we were in Roseville. We would go to San Francisco, we'd go to stage shows, we'd go out to nice dinners. We'd get dressed up, we'd walk on Market Street, we'd go to Union Square, we'd go to nice hotels. That's the way it was. Where did my mother learn that? I don't know. I'm not sure. But that was something she loved to do, and my dad loved to do it, too, the two of them.

Were we involved with the Greek community to the point of saying, to do a lot of the. . . not as much. Terry's family was probably more involved. They were very much churchgoing people. We were not. But did they care about other people? Yes, they did. Did they do things that were nice? Yes, they did. But were they just, you know, fanatic about the church? No, not so much.

Ettinger: Even on the holidays?

Kastanis: On the holidays we went to church and we participated in activities, and they would do things that would affect me that were part of the church, or if they had fraternal organizations and they had dances.

Every weekend there would be a dance, by this group or that group or whatever.

In order for me to get out, because they wouldn't allow me otherwise, they would go, then we would go to the dances. We'd get all dressed up and we'd go to the dances, and that's when maybe I would. . . . she would allow me then to dance with somebody. My mother would say, "Okay, you can dance with so-and-so. But you're not dancing with *him*."

And so, okay, all right, fine. So she was there. My mother and father would sit, and my dad would kind of walk around and go talk to people, because he loved to talk, he loved to visit with people, and my mother would sit and watch what was going on.

Ettinger: Your dad was more social in general?

Kastanis: Yeah, he was much more social in that way, yeah. What was interesting, though, was after my dad died, and he died in 1969, my mother became more social. All at once she started to. . . . she could joke a little bit more, she could be. . . . I don't know what it was. He never kept her down, but it was almost like that was her job. Her job was to be the serious one. My dad was the one who had the jokes, and my dad was the one who, he'd see somebody, he couldn't

remember their name, and he'd say, "Hey, Cutie, how are ya?" He was much more outgoing.

My mother had to be the serious one, but then later on she became a little bit more relaxed. But she was always tough. She was tough. She was tougher on Bess, probably, than she was on me, because the two of them, they used to get into it all the time. But with me not so much, because I was the one, not the perfect one, but I was the one who would listen to her more, or I just wouldn't set her off. I knew not to set her off, what things would set her off.

But as far as the church and those kinds of things, the social outlet was more with the church than to sit and read the Bible or do. . . . we never did those things. We never did that. We knew our church, we knew what was to be done. I knew it from the choir. I knew all of that from the choir. I knew the liturgy.

Ettinger: The choir sang in Greek?

Kastanis: The choir sang in Greek. You know, I knew all of those kinds of things. I was part of that choir. I was one of the youngest members, twelve years old to be in the choir, but again, I was bigger and I was a singer. And the cantor from the church said, "How old is she?" to my mother.

She says, "She's only twelve."

"Oh, she's old enough. Put her in the choir. She can sing anyway."

So my mother said, "Okay. You're going to go to . . ." I mean, things were that way. There was flexibility.

The rules were not such where, "Ooh, I'm sorry, you can't be in the choir. You're not old enough," or anything. It didn't make any difference.

Ettinger: Right. Who was the cantor?

Kastanis: The cantor was. . . and his son is still in Sacramento. His name was Mr. Mammalis. Mr. Mammalis was the cantor, he had a wonderful, wonderful voice. His son did not have his wonderful voice, but his daughter-in-law, the daughter-in-law is very much involved with the church.

Ettinger: I think we interviewed her.

Kastanis: Yeah, Julie Mammalis, yeah, Julie. And Julie was in the choir at the time when I. . . she's a little bit younger. She's younger than I am. But some of the people that are part of that church, that were part of

the choir when we came to this church particularly, I'm still friends with. One of the gals, who was a little bit younger than I was, was at the party, and her husband and his brother were the bartenders, and we've been close and been friends for years and years. All those years we've stayed friends.

So a closeness, but not to the point of. . . . Terry and I, our friendships are not just with the Greeks. They're not with the Greeks. We have more friends on the outside. It's a different group of people. It's not just the church people that we have been friends with. My mother always said, and I really believe her, "Don't get involved with church politics," which I did.

Ettinger: You did get involved?

Kastanis: Yes, I did. From about 1994 or '95 I went onto the parish council, and so I was president of the parish council for the church for five years, which was unheard of, number one, longer than anybody else, and also to be the woman who would have done it. There was one other woman who was the parish council president for only one year, so I was on it for a longer period of time.

And I became very close, I got to be good friends with the priest, but not in the religious sense of the word, just respect for each other,

and he's very learned in history and things like that. He likes to read, and we became good friends, and he respected me, so that's why. And organizationally I was very much involved at that level.

So I left the choir, because I couldn't do both of them, and did more with the parish council.

Ettinger: So you were in the choir for all those years?

Kastanis: All those years. That's where Terry and I met.

Ettinger: For thirty or forty years?

Kastanis: Oh yeah.

Ettinger: Did that mean going and singing every Sunday?

Kastanis: Yes, yeah. That meant singing every Sunday. But was I involved with all the other functions? No, not particularly. The choir functions, yeah. But I always kept the distance. I remembered my mother, "Don't get involved with . . ." But then all at once I did, and that was, you know, like I say, it was not a bad experience. It was a lot of hard work, a lot of. . . the Greek community has a tendency to be very

cliquish, and they have their people that they are friends with, they come from the same parts of Greece, and they're still that way. And we were never part of that.

Terry was an outsider. Terry came from Salt Lake City, and even to this day he's my husband. After all these years, that community kind of thing, yeah, because the families go back so far.

Ettinger: What year did he move here?

Kastanis: He came here in 1959. See, we got married in '61, and I had just come off of a divorce at the time, which was the ecclesiastical. We had to get the ecclesiastical divorce in order to get married.

Ettinger: I want to jump back to something else. This is fascinating.

Kastanis: What do you mean it's fascinating? [laughs]

Ettinger: It's a really interesting family story. When you moved to Sacramento, and they bought this house immediately, is that true or not? And what did your father do?

Kastanis: My father had just sold the place. They had sold the place up at Auburn, and they wanted to move to Sacramento. He came to Sacramento first and was looking around. We were still living in Roseville. He found a house on 41st Street, 951-41st Street, just down the street, between J and H. It's a two-story house and a very nice home. And I'll never forget, he wanted us to come and see the house, and I remember Bess was along.

Ettinger: She was married at this point, or not?

Kastanis: No, she wasn't married yet, she wasn't married yet. She came to see the house. She said, "Wait a minute. This has only got two bedrooms. Where am I supposed to sleep? Where's she going to sleep?" Me. "I'm not sharing a room with her again."

So they said, "Okay." So they bought that house anyway, because it was a very nice home, and they paid \$9500 for it. So then my father went out and started looking again.

He came home one day and he said to my mother, he says, "I have found a home that is like a castle."

"Where are you talking about?"

And he says, "On 45th and M Street there's a house that looks like an English castle." It's the house where Ross Rellis [phonetic] lives

now, on 45th and M. You know, 45th and M, that's really the high-rent district.

My mother said, "Is it that good?"

And he says, "Oh, it's wonderful."

She said, "How much is it?"

"Well, they want 50,000."

She said, "Are you crazy? \$50,000! We're not paying \$50,000 for a house."

So he went out again, started looking again, came across this house and saw this house and said, "I want you to see this house." I mean, it's exactly the same as it was. The original house had only two bedrooms upstairs, but they added two more bedrooms and another bath, so it has upstairs it's four bedrooms and two bathrooms upstairs. So we came and saw this house, and my mother liked this house. She liked the entrance. But also understand, she made some changes. But she liked the entrance, because it had a hallway . . .

[Begin tape two, side A]

Ettinger: You were talking about the house.

Kastanis: The house. So anyway, so they looked at the house and my mother said, "I like this house." They paid \$16,000 for this house. Then what she did was, the entrance that you came in was not the original entrance. It had the walls on the side, but the entrance was here where you step up. That was the front door, and that was an enclosed little area, but it was outside, and upstairs above that there was a patio upstairs.

But my mother said, "No, I don't like it because when they come into the house they walk onto the hardwood floor, and they've got dirty shoes, and it's going to ruin the floor. So we're going to enclose that and put tile there, because if they come in they won't ruin the tile." So that's why that's closed in and became like a little atrium type of thing there, and then you come into the other house.

So the only thing that they made a change of was that one room. The rest of the house is exactly. There's nothing that has changed. If you turn around and look behind you, and look above, you will see some little deals that are hanging up above. See the little deals that are hanging down?

Ettinger: In the passageway, yes.

Kastanis: The passageway. Those are hooks for a curtain to be pulled across.

Those were there originally. I've never moved them, removed them, see. So you could close this, that room off from here. That room did not have any heating in it. That was an extra room at one time.

Now, see where the television set is? The television set, that used to be a door that used to go outside, that she said, "No, I need a room to put the. . . ." when we got the television set, "I need a place to put the television." So she enclosed that. There were steps there that went out to the outside, and made that the little television spot.

She was always thinking about. . . to say major changes, no. The basement downstairs, we have a basement, half the house is a basement downstairs. The stove that's downstairs is the stove that she had when she lived in Lincoln. It is from 1925, '26, and it is a wood-burning gas stove. It has wood burning, you can burn the wood on the one side. The oven that's on the bottom is a wood-burning oven; it can cook. But the burners on top are gas, and the two ovens on top are gas.

Ettinger: That's interesting.

Kastanis: And it is a porcelain-finish type of thing. It's a Sharp. I've never seen another one like it. Yeah, so she's got that one, and she used to do her

canning and her baking down in the basement, because we didn't have the air conditioning. We had heating in the floor furnace is still there. She used to have a wall air conditioner in her bedroom, and then put one in the wall in the entrance hall upstairs, but these were wall units, so we didn't have central heat.

But the bottom part of the house never got that. . . . see, right now I don't have any air conditioner on down here, and it stays fairly cool. You close things up, and we always closed things up in the summertime, it got real hot. We put the fans in later, but like I said, this part of the house stayed fairly cool.

The kitchen is exactly the same. The stove that's in there is the same stove that we bought in 1945 when we moved in. I'm still cooking on that same stove. Those 130 people, how many I have, I still cooked on that stove. So, I mean, like I said, some of the things I do are just like what my mother did.

Ettinger: When you moved here and your mother set up and took charge of the house, what did your father do for a living?

Kastanis: He had a restaurant, and he stayed in the restaurant business for a while. He had a place on Broadway, 19th and Broadway, a small coffee shop. It was a corner. There's a Vietnamese restaurant or something like that there. It was called Le Marché, The Market, and

there was a corner with parking in the front, and there was like an outdoor market kind of place, and they had produce and things. And on the corner with the tower that had Le Marché on it, was the coffee shop, and as a kid I remember going and working there in the summertime. When my mother had me finish doing the work around here, then I would take the bus and I would go down and work at the coffee shop. It was all stools all the way around, and it was about nineteen-seat, where's the tower, the Tower Theater. It's not far from the Tower Theater. All of that area was all, I mean, there were little shops all along there.

But this was a very nice little market, and then like I say, the coffee shop was on the corner. He was there from about, it would have been about '46, '47, till the fifties, early fifties. He was there for about six, seven years probably.

Ettinger: And the business did well?

Kastanis: Yes, the business did extremely well. But I remember going up there. I mean, at twelve years old he would go, you know, in the afternoons when it wasn't real busy he'd go off and go and buy his stuff and whatever it was, because he had people working at the place. But he would leave me in charge. I was about twelve years old, and I was in

charge. They'd come in and I'd make sodas for them, and I'd make hamburgers for them. I had the grill, I knew how to work the grill and all that stuff. You know, I did all the stuff. I'd wait on them.

Ettinger: This was a kind of a neighborhood kind of . . .

Kastanis: Yeah, it was a neighborhood kind of thing. And then I remember very, very clearly, during the State Fair, when the State Fair was over on Stockton Blvd., that was the time just before school would start. For two weeks I would go with him every morning to open up the little coffee shop, because the truckers and people that were coming through to go to the State Fair would stop there first. So we'd go down at four o'clock in the morning and open things up, and get things going. I'd wait on the people and my dad would do the cooking, and stuff like that. So I remember that. So I was always involved with some place along the way.

So when you said, "What did you do?" You worked, that's what you did. You know, you didn't lay around and have play dates and stuff like that. You never did that stuff. So I did that all the time when he had the restaurant down there, and so I would go down, in the summertime I would go down. Every afternoon I'd go down. I'd take the bus and go down and help him.

And then he'd close up. See, it was mostly breakfast and lunch, he didn't stay open for dinner. So by five, five-thirty or something like that he'd close up, and then we'd come home together, because he had the car. And then my mother would have dinner ready for us.

Ettinger: So you're in junior high, high school, and it's pretty clear your parents want you to go to college already.

Kastanis: Yes.

Ettinger: What kind of aspirations did you have? What did you think about you wanted to do? You liked to sing. What did you . . .

Kastanis: Well, I knew I was going to be a music teacher, that's all.

Ettinger: Oh, you knew?

Kastanis: Yeah, it was all. There wasn't any question. That's what I was going to do, I was going to be a music teacher. And when I went to Sac State I was in the first freshman class at Sac State, so it was the beginnings there, and the jackrabbits were still running across the yard. We knew everybody. In fact, the home that we had on 41st Street, the

one that we used it as a rental, and Bess has that house, is the president of Sac State at the time, Guy West, lived in that house when he first moved to Sacramento, and he rented that house from us.

So there was no question I was going to go to Sac State. My mother says, "You're not going anyplace else. It's right here." I used to stand on the corner on J Street, catch the bus, because I didn't have a car. There was one car in the family. I was either going to walk, or somebody would stop by, one of my buddies would stop by and pick me up and take me to school. There was no question, and I was going to go into education, and that's all there was to it.

I was in the music department and I did all of the things in music, and to this day, the person who was my advisor, Pascal Monk [phonetic], who's been around, had been around for many, many years, his wife is still living, she was about ninety-eight years old and I saw her about a year ago, and I said to her, I went up to her and I said, "Mrs. Monk, maybe you don't remember."

"I remember you quite well, Penny," because we became very close. We got very close with all of these people that were in the original group that were at Sac State, including the teachers. My folks would have. . . . the house was always open. That was one thing I would say about my mom. She loved to have the social, and my dad loved to have people over.

On my dad's name day, which is St. George Day, the twenty-third of March, they would have a celebration, St. George Day, and that would be the time. . . . when I was in college I would invite all of my college professors to come to the house for the party, and they would all show up, and my dad would love to entertain. We had the piano, and then the fellow who was my piano teacher there, Richard Carpenter, would sit at the piano and I would sing.

In fact, we had a function last year where I had an author, a visiting author. I had dinner for him here and somebody said, "Can't we have all of our functions here? It's like the French Salon." And we went into the living room and everybody sat around and had their little cup of coffee, and they said, "It's just like the French Salon." My mother loved to do that stuff. See, she liked that.

Ettinger: Did she have good friends that she socialized with?

Kastanis: She had good friends, a few, not many, not a lot. They did not socialize, say, "Let's go out to lunch together, do things." They didn't do that. She never did that. She was at home. They used to talk to each other on the phone. They would see each other maybe on the weekends or something like that. But there was work to be done. Everything was done by hand, really. The clothes were hung up. The

carpets were vacuumed. The floors were mopped, and we did everything ourselves. And I hate to tell you, I still do it. I don't have anybody come in and help me do any of this stuff. I do it all myself, you know.

The cooking, what, I'm going to have somebody else do the cooking? Wait a minute. Take out? [laughs] What are you talking about, take out? I just cook, that's all. So a lot of the things that we did were part of our lifestyle, and they still continue to be part of the lifestyle. And it was okay, it was all right.

Our outings in the summertime were when my dad would come home in the evenings, after we had dinner we would go out and take a ride to the parks. We'd go to William Land Park or ride around McKinley Park, and then we'd go and get an ice cream. We'd go and get a Frostee, or something like that, and we'd take little rides. Maybe they'd be about an hour or something like that, then we'd come home. And then we'd sit and we'd read. It was a quiet, it was kind of a quiet life.

We didn't have a lot of people. A lot of Greeks, and probably when you went out and talked to a lot, a lot of them had a lot of family, they had a lot of people coming in all the time. Ours was not that way. Ours were planned kind of parties. My dad didn't have any family. My mother just had her sister, and that was it. But we didn't

have other relatives, there were no other relatives. So our home was not open in that way. It was always to come to a party, and they liked to come to the house, but it was always a planned kind of a party.

Ettinger: Was your aunt still living through the fifties?

Kastanis: Yes, she was still . . .

Ettinger: And she was still close with your mother?

Kastanis: Yeah, not as much as they used to be. But I think relationships sometimes get strained as the years go by, and so things may have been said, and I know my mother. . . . I think my aunt said something to my dad one time, and hurt his feelings, and my mother couldn't forgive her, because my dad was always, even when they first got married and my aunt was by herself, and she was divorced, you know, in a couple of years she was divorced. . . . we used to go and we'd take boxes of food to her, and do things for her, and take her places.

And then I remember one time my aunt said something to my dad. He came back and he said, "Why did she say that? Why was she unkind to me? What did I do, did I do something?"

You know, and my mother never forgave her. "How dare you? He took you in just like you were his own. He was there whenever you needed something. He helped you with your children, and with taking care and giving you money, whatever was necessary. That you would treat him that way . . ." She never forgave that. Yeah, see, there were standards. Don't go over the line. Don't go over the line. She was not easy to forgive on things like that.

Ettinger: When you finished at Sac State what year is that?

Kastanis: I graduated in 1957.

Ettinger: And you had a B.A.

Kastanis: I had a B.A., and then I went into teaching. I taught at Sutter Junior High, Sutter Junior High, not the one where it is now. I started teaching at the old one that was down on 18th and K Street. That was the original Sacramento High School. That was the one where the floors were oiled, and it was an old, massive kind of building with the steps and, I mean, with the boiler rooms and the windows that opened on the second floor, these huge windows with no screens on them.

The kids could just fall right out of them. I mean, that's where I started teaching. That was my first year of teaching.

Then we moved to the new one over here on Alhambra, that's Sutter Junior High.

Ettinger: You were teaching music?

Kastanis: I was teaching music. I taught French. I taught a class called general language, where I taught French, German, Spanish, and Latin, and I taught two classes, seventh-grade social studies and eighth-grade social studies. I had five preparations first year.

Ettinger: Had you studied all those languages at Sac State?

Kastanis: No. No, I hadn't, but that was okay. [laughs]

Ettinger: That's the way at that level, yes.

Kastanis: That's the way it was at that level, and I was a beginning teacher. They weren't going to do anything special for me. So anyway, so I was there, but I was only there for a year, because then I got married

after that, and moved to San Francisco with the first one, yeah. See, so anyway, I moved to San Francisco.

And then when I came back here six months later, and there again, my mother was the one who made sure that I got back and I was okay, because I was not okay when I got back, so she was the one who came down and took me away, and proceeded to take control of that situation, because it was very abusive. So that was all part.

Again, like I said, she was the strong one. My dad would never have been able to deal with that, and she was the one who made sure that I got back here, because I was under a doctor's care at the time when I came back. So then I got better, so the first place I went back to was the church choir, because I had been connected with the choir, and that was the first place. And then I didn't go back into teaching right away. Yeah, I couldn't have dealt with that, but then I started subbing.

Ettinger: What year did you come back?

Kastanis: I came back in 1959. I got married in '57, yeah, about '58, '58. See, I was only teaching in here, and then '58 I got married, and '59 I came back.

Ettinger: So then you started getting integrated back into the community?

Kastanis: Yeah. I went back, and Terry was in the choir. He came from Salt Lake City, he was in the choir in Salt Lake. I knew him from years past. I knew his brothers, because we were all involved. . . . if you were involved with the choir in our church, you used to have conferences. We'd have conferences and everybody would get together. A lot of the young people met each other through choir, and got married. That was a way to meet people.

In fact, we're going to a choir conference next week. The problem is, there's very few young people involved with it now. It's all the old ones that were involved over the years back, that are still involved with it today. [laughs] Because in those days when I was growing up, that was the place that you had as an outlet. In today's world they have a lot of different outlets, so choir is not one of them, so we have very few young people as part of the choir.

But that's where we met. First of all, he came to Sacramento. He met. . . . the choir director, he had been the choir director's best man at their wedding, and so that's how we happened to make the connection, and we met each other. We were both in education. Terry had a job at Highlands High school as the librarian there, so that's where we connected.

Ettinger: And he moved out with his family, or by himself?

Kastanis: No, he came by himself. He came by himself, and that was very tough. And the reason, basically, that we got together was because of my mother again. My mother met him at a function, liked him very much, because he was so polite and pleasant to her. He used to call to talk to me, and she'd say, "Come over for dinner, [Greek word], my son. Come over for dinner." She felt sorry for him because he was without his mother and father. He was very close to his family. So he used to live not far from the church. He lived over on F Street. So I'd come home from work and he'd be here. I said, "What's he doing here?"

And so she said, "Well, I told him to come and eat. What's the difference, one more person?" She loved him. In fact, she used to tell me. She says, "I like him better than I do you sometimes," because Terry is just like my father, exactly. He has the same qualities, the kindness, the feeling for other people, never an unkind word, never, and my mother saw that. And yes, she may have been critical of my dad at times, but that was the part of my dad that she loved. And she's exactly the same way, he's exactly the same way, and she saw that in him.

So anyway, so that's how we happened to meet, but she was very much for the whole situation. It's a funny story, because she sat him down and after we had been going out a little bit, she let me date him, at twenty-five and divorced she allowed me to date him. We could go to a movie or something like that. So anyway, she sat him down one day and she said to him, "What are your intentions?" My dad didn't do this, my mother did. "What are your intentions?"

He says, "Well, I like Penny very much."

She says, "No. Let's get down to brass tacks now. How much money you got?"

And he says, "Well, I've saved up about two or three thousand dollars."

"Okay. She's got about five thousand, you've got two or three thousand. That's okay, then. It's time for you guys to get married."

He said, "Oh, okay." [laughs] So he told me, he says, "Well, your mother said it's okay if we get married."

I said, "What? What are you talking about?"

And so he says, "Yeah, she said it was okay. You've got some money, I've got some money. We ought to get married."

So I said, "Oh, okay." [laughter] But she was in charge, see. She was going to make sure it was going to be.

She says, "I don't want anything to happen like it did the last time." So anyway, so he knew, and he knew that she meant it, because she would have killed him if he did, because she'd [inaudible] to kill the other guy. She took no prisoners. But she wanted to make sure that it did not happen to me again.

Ettinger: What year did you get married then?

Kastanis: We got married in 1961.

Ettinger: And you were working, you were both working?

Kastanis: Yeah. I was subbing. I did not take a full-time job, because I was not able to at the time, because I was not well. So anyway, so I was subbing in Grant District, and so we got married the first year I subbed in Grant, and then I worked at the Rio Linda Junior High for the year. I got a long-term sub job, and I probably could have continued on, but then I got pregnant after we got married, and then we had the first child, George.

So then after that, after we had the second child I stayed home. Terry was at Highlands High School, and then he moved to Foothill High, and we lived out in the north area, and bought a home and all of

that, you know. And family was. . . . my mother and father were very happy about it, were very happy about him, about Terry and the kids and all of that.

So our life started in that direction, and then I started working for Bess. I started working at the employment agency for a while. I worked for her for about three, four years after the children got a little bit older, and then it was time, and that's when I said, "I think I need to get back into education."

So then we moved from the north area, and moved to the south area, and I got involved with the kids' school. They were going to the school, and that's when the principal said, "Why don't you become the librarian?" And that's where the connection, and that was in '70, see, so all that period of time had gone by, almost ten years. Yeah, almost ten years had gone by. I worked for Bess for maybe about four or five years, and then part of the time I was just home with the kids.

Ettinger: Was Bess widowed by then?

Kastanis: No. She was not a widow until. . . . no, Terry Senior was still alive. She wasn't a widow until, was it in the eighties? In fact, it was 1968, because Terry Senior had just died, or 1970. It was about 1970. I think he had died right after my dad died.

Ettinger: So George was born in. . . . your first?

Kastanis: Our first son was born in 1963, and then Sophia was born in 1965, yeah. So George is forty-three. . . .

[interruption]

Kastanis: Some consulting work, I'm still working, see, because I still work, even though I'm not working full-time. But I just left a position with the library organization, and I've stayed with the library organization throughout, done a lot of things with the library, and was the state president, was the vice president in charge of legislation. You know, I've got legislation that I got adopted for school libraries and things like that, worked with Delaine Easton and under Pete Wilson when he was in, so anyway, so I've done a lot of those kinds of things, done a lot of the advocacy kinds of things.

Ettinger: Going back just to your own kids for a second, when you were raising them through the late sixties and early seventies, first of all, was your mother really involved in their lives?

Kastanis: Yeah, she was to a point. She was, but the thing with my mom was always, "You want me to take care of the children, you come here." They never came to the house to take care of the children. We were still the children, understand. We never became anything but the children. We were always the children, so therefore they were the matriarch. She was the matriarch and my dad was the patriarch, you know, I mean, the two of them. And so therefore, they were going to be here.

Terry's folks were different. Terry's folks used to come out from Salt Lake City to visit us, but we'd go back and visit them quite often. But they'd come and they'd stay with us. But my mother and father, my mother would say, "No, you want me to take care of the children," we'd bring them to the house and they'd stay overnight.

But to say she was involved, no, because I should know what to do. Why would I not know what to do? She had raised me. She had told me, she had trained me. I was college educated, why would I not know what to do? Why would I ask her questions about things like that? And so therefore, very seldom. And a lot of the things that she did I didn't want my kids to be, I didn't want to raise them the same way.

So anyway, the children, our children were basically raised by both of us. I was raised mostly by my mother, with my father kind of

standing on the side. But with us, with Terry and myself, we both raised them, so we were sharing, you know, and we always made sure that we lived close to where the schools were, and Terry was able to take them and do things with them, those kinds of things. So it was a little bit different.

But my parents were always there when it was necessary. Now, if we needed to get a loan or something like that, we didn't go to a bank, we came to my mother. Not my father, to my mother. "We need a little bit of money for a certain period of time."

"Fine." And she says, "Okay, I've got the amortization list here." She knew exactly. When we wanted to buy a piece of property or something like that, "Okay. You sign the paper." She was very businesslike when it came to things like that. So she knew, and if she'd had any kind of education she probably would have been a CEO of some company, or something like that.

Ettinger: Sounds like it.

Kastanis: Yeah, because she knew how to deal with the money.

Ettinger: Now, did your children when they were growing up, did they get involved with the church in the way you were?

Kastanis: Yes, but they never, it was never quite the same, because we didn't speak Greek. We spoke English, which was their language. They both understand Greek, Sophia more so because she married a Greek, and his parents are from Greece. Our son-in-law's parents are from Crete, and so therefore they speak Greek. But Sophia understands it quite well. To speak it, a little bit; George, barely. He understands it again, but he does not speak it.

Ettinger: They'd learn it from Greek school?

Kastanis: They didn't go to Greek school, they didn't go to Greek school.

Ettinger: How did they pick it up, from Grandma?

Kastanis: Just from the grandparents, from the grandparents, from Terry's folks and from my folks. And see, Terry's folks were much the same as mine, except it was the opposite. His father could not speak English as well. His mother did, but she was raised here. The mother was raised here. She was born in Greece, but she went to school, even to elementary school up to the third grade here, so she got to learn, so she could speak and she could write English.

We'd get letters from his folks, and his father would write it in Greek, and then his mother would write in English, see. And that's the way it would be with my folks, the same way, except it was the opposite. My dad was the one who spoke the English, my mother was the one who spoke the Greek.

Ettinger: I forgot to ask about whether or not your father or mother had any involvement, or you and Terry later, in the AHEPA.

Kastanis: My father was an AHEPAN, and he was involved with the AHEPA, the original in 1926 that was here in Sacramento. He was one of the charter members of AHEPA. They were very much involved with AHEPA. My mother even to the day, when she was well enough, up until she was up to almost eighty years old was she going to the AHEPA conventions. She was a daughter of Penelope, and she used to go to the AHEPA conventions, the national conventions, and so they were very much involved, yeah, and my dad was, too.

But my dad was also involved with, sometimes, he was a member of the Elks Club for a while. He was a golfer, you know. He associated with a lot of the businesspeople. He didn't just stay within the Greek culture. He became more Americanized in a lot of different ways, my mother not so much. She was with the daughters, and like I

say, she used to go to the conventions and things like that. But as far as being a member of other non-Greek clubs, she was not. She was not in that vein.

But they were always involved with my school. Whatever it was, whatever I was participating in, they were always there. They were always in the front row. Whether I was getting an award, whether I was singing, whatever I was performing, anything like that they were always there. They were always involved in that realm, whether it was the Greek or whether it was the school.

In fact, I don't know if I've got the picture over there. It's one that I got an award in junior high or something like that, some special award. My mother walked, she walked to Kit Carson to be there. My dad was working but she would walk. She would be there, yeah. So they were very much. . . . there were just the two of us, just my sister and myself, but my mother took it very seriously with the children. And I don't know whether the strictness and all of that was part of her. . . like you said, what she had gone through, the terror of worrying about was a child going to be hurt or something like that, from the past experiences that she had, when even as a refugee, or when they were being persecuted.

I remember her telling me stories as a child. She was afraid. She took out her earrings that she wore as a child, when she was a girl,

because she'd heard stories from her friends that when the Turks would come in they'd rip the earrings out of their ears. You know, they'd rip their ears, and so I mean fears like that, of not knowing what was going to happen next.

Were they going to come to the house? And the one night, like she said, the night that they had to leave the house, somebody came knocking at the door, and, "Take whatever you can and get out now. They're coming through. They'll be here within a half hour." And taking whatever they could and splitting up, and just going up to the hills, and not seeing each other then for a year. See, so that kind of fear, of never knowing.

And I think that's why she became so strong when it came to things like, you've got to know exactly what's going to be done, and when they're going to be done. Are you finished yet? This is your timeline that you've got to fit into all of these kinds of things. And I think that's why she was so tough on those, on keeping track, making sure that you keep track, you keep to your word, all of those kinds of things.

And my dad was just too kind-hearted, just a soft-hearted guy. He was just easy, he and my sister. Bess had a lot of, just loved him dearly, just loved him dearly, because he was so. . . . my mother was hard on her, and he would say, "It's okay, Bess. It's okay, Bess. It's

okay.” You know. And he would always make kind of amends, yeah, but she was tough, and she was the one in charge.

So, what else do we need, anything else? Is that it?

Ettinger: Well, that was great. I mean, is there anything that you thought we should talk about that I didn’t get to? I mean, one could go on for a long time, I’m sure.

Kastanis: Yeah, I know.

Ettinger: It was very rich hearing about your. . . .

Kastanis: Yeah, you know, the church itself is an important part. The church is an important part of the Greeks’ lives, but it’s not everything. What has happened, and I see this happening now, Patrick, is a fanaticism within religions, where people are overwhelmed by it, and unless they follow the rule of whatever the old guys in the back room have said, there’s no place for any kind of being able to make your own decisions. Free will is always there, and what I’m always concerned about is when the church becomes so strong and so much a part of people’s lives, where the free will is gone, where decisions cannot be

made on your own of what's wrong and right, and you must only live by that one rule. That's tough, that's tough.

I'm seeing it within our own church today. It was never that way. We were never raised that way. We were raised with, "Remember, the priest is only a man. He's going to make mistakes." The church, you live within those rules, but it doesn't mean you're going to go to hell if you don't follow every single rule. We do all mistakes as people, and what I'm seeing now with the church, and even though it's important, I think it's an important thing to see that the church is strong, but there is a bit of a fanaticism within that, the evangelical kind of "there's one way to do things." And that's the part that's a little frightening.

We had an opportunity to have a good time, but within reason, to love people around us that came from different cultures, and that was okay. Sure, they wanted us to marry Greeks and all of those, but that was because the cultures were the same, you know, things that we did. But now today to say that you're wrong because you did something that was not exactly what the church doctrine is, or you must only do certain kinds of things, or you must follow every single rule and regulation, I want to say, you know, rules and regulations, I mean, there's only so many that you can.

So the church is still important, but we were never, at least I wasn't raised that way. It's important, it's a part of your life, you must have

respect for it, you understand the word of God and the word of Christ, and we are Christians and all that, but you know, my dad used to have friends that used to come into the restaurant. They were Muslim, they were Confucius, they were Buddhists, and he would respect every single one of them for what they had to offer. So that's why I'm just saying.

And even with the oral history, you're going to find that some are very much involved with the church to the point that that's all that they ever did, was all centered around the church. My life was not that way. My life was not that way.

Ettinger: Yeah, we're finding a good mix of experiences.

Kastanis: A variety, yeah, a variety.

Ettinger: It's been wonderful doing these interviews, and you really, when they're all said and done, maybe I should turn this off.

[End of interview]